

**Documents from the  
History of Lutheranism,  
1517-1750**

edited by  
**Eric Lund**

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DOCUMENTS FROM THE HISTORY OF LUTHERANISM, 1517-1750

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PREFACE

ABBREVIATIONS

THE LIFE OF M.  
A CHRONOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE  
LIFETIME (1

The Call for Re

1. Luther: Lect
2. Luther: Disp
3. Pope Leo X
4. Luther's Mei
5. Luther's Mei
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10. Prieras's D
11. Proceeding
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12. Papal Bull
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## Chapter Five

# Factionalism in the Late Reformation (1546–80)



When Philip Melancthon participated in the process of formulating the Leipzig Interim, he was convinced that the compromises it contained only concerned nonessential matters of church practice (see chapter four). He believed that what he said in this document about justification, good works, and other doctrinal issues did not conflict in any significant way with the theological stance endorsed by the Lutheran churches in the Augsburg Confession (doc. #105). Other Lutheran church leaders, however, offered a very different interpretation of what Melancthon was doing. They attacked him because they thought not only that his conciliatory actions were a blatant manifestation of cowardice and a strategy based on a tragic miscalculation of the intentions of the emperor, but also that he was actually demonstrating a willingness to alter some of the fundamental doctrinal teachings of the Lutheran churches. For several decades after the end of the Schmalkald War, the defenders and opponents of the Leipzig Interim continued to argue with each other about which group could rightly claim to be providing constructive leadership of the reform movement that Luther had inaugurated.

Most of the theologians of Electoral Saxony, especially the humanistically educated professors at the Universities of Wittenberg and Leipzig, were sympathetic toward the interpretation of Christian doctrine elaborated by Philip Melancthon. Consequently, they came to be called Philippists. The critics of the Philippists, forcefully led by Matthias Flacius Illyricus, clustered in Magdeburg and later at the new University of Jena, which was founded in 1547. They called themselves the Gnesio-Lutherans, the genuine Lutherans, thereby signaling their belief that the Lutheran churches were endangered by the infiltration of false teachers, whose influence they intended to oppose. These factions faced off against each other in several extended doctrinal disputes that were only resolved by the emergence to prominence of another group of theologians who did not fully endorse the positions of either the Philippists or the Gnesio-Lutherans. Through patient negotiating, this mediating party managed to check the tendency of the opposing factions to drive each other into increasingly extreme positions. They were also successful in moving the churches toward a new consensus that was articulated in the most elaborate of the traditional Lutheran confessional documents, the Formula of Concord.

The doctrinal dispute that developed most directly out of the Interim crisis was the Adiaphorist Controversy. Both the Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philippists agreed that some church practices were neither commanded nor forbidden in the Scriptures and could therefore be observed or ignored without coming into conflict with the doctrinal

teachings of the church. They reached different conclusions, however, about which ceremonies fell within this category of adiaphora. Even more importantly, they disagreed about whether these ceremonies continued to be matters of indifference when the churches were forced by some hostile power to accept them or face adverse consequences. The Gnesio-Lutherans argued that, in periods of persecution, yielding to the demands of the enemies of the church, even on seemingly nonessential matters, would be dangerous for several reasons. Simple believers would be confused by such compliance with the demands of their persecutors, and the absence of any resistance to the persecutors would encourage them to intensify their efforts to destroy the churches (doc. #106). To the Gnesio-Lutherans, coerced acceptance of nonessential customs and church practices was more than dangerous; it was also sinful because any failure to confess the true faith in a decisive way was tantamount to idolatry.

At first, Melanchthon answered the Gnesio-Lutherans by insisting that their unqualified resistance to any compromise with the emperor actually posed the greatest threat to the churches (doc. #105). Eventually, however, the polemical writings of Flacius and other Gnesio-Lutherans turned so many people against Melanchthon that he grew weary of defending himself and expressed regret over his decision to participate in the development of the Leipzig Interim proposal (docs. #106 and 107). Despite this shift in Melanchthon's position, some of his associates continued to argue against the Gnesio-Lutheran's views about adiaphora and about what should have been done during the Interim crisis. Over two decades after the debate had begun, the Philippist theologians of the Universities of Wittenberg and Leipzig still insisted that the Gnesio-Lutherans misunderstood Christian freedom if they taught that adiaphora change their status in times of persecution (doc. #108). Both sides claimed to find support for their positions in the Bible and the writings of Martin Luther.

In scrutinizing the Leipzig Interim proposal, the Gnesio-Lutherans also found several doctrinal statements that they considered just as problematic as the reintroduction of Catholic church practices. In particular, they took issue with language about the necessity of good works (doc. #110). Nikolaus von Amsdorf, a valued coworker of Luther in the early days of the Reformation who had been a fellow exile with Flacius in Magdeburg during the Schmalkald War, was most outspoken about this issue. As early as 1536 he had complained to Luther about passages in the writings of Melanchthon that suggested that justification cannot occur without the presence of good works. In 1551 he began again to publish critical treatises about this issue, naming Johannes Bugenhagen, another early coworker of Luther, and Georg Major, a colleague of Melanchthon at the University of Wittenberg, as the chief perpetrators of Melanchthon's viewpoint (doc. #112). Major responded at length to Amsdorf's charges, and, consequently, the prolonged debate about this issue that ensued has come to be called the Majorist Controversy.

As in the Adiaphorist Controversy, Melanchthon once again sought to distance himself from a position he had taken in the past. Recognizing that it was easy to confuse what his writings and the Leipzig Interim said about good works with the Catholic belief that good works earned merit, he proposed that Lutherans should be more cautious about using the language of necessity (doc. #115). Major, however, stood his ground.

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Fearful of Antinomian tendencies in Lutheranism (that is, the belief that the Christian has been freed from the need to fulfill or seek guidance from the Law of God), he tried to emphasize the connection between justification and the life of new obedience to God that grace makes possible. He denied that true faith exists where there is no evidence of its fruits, namely, good works (docs. #111 and 114).

Other prominent Gnesio-Lutherans such as Flacius joined Amsdorf in raising questions about the implications of Major's arguments (doc. #113), but in the later stages of the dispute many of them felt the necessity to distance themselves from some of the intemperate pronouncements that Amsdorf began to make. Exasperated by Major's persistent defense of the necessity of good works, Amsdorf was driven to affirm the very opposite, that good works were actually detrimental to salvation (docs. #116 and 117). In saying this, he meant to point out the danger of trusting in good works as a way to gain salvation, but since this qualifying thought was not explicitly articulated in the slogan that Amsdorf circulated, he only contributed to the further polarization of the Gnesio-Lutherans and Philippists.

The Majorist Controversy was not the only doctrinal dispute in which the two parties tended to provoke each other into increasingly extravagant doctrinal assertions. The same phenomenon took place in the interrelated Synergist and Flacian Controversies about free will and original sin. Another disputed aspect of the Leipzig Interim was its assertion that a person cooperates with God in the process of salvation. This brief declaration reflected Melanchthon's discomfort with the position Luther had taken in his debate with Erasmus about free will (doc. #119). Unlike his mentor, Melanchthon felt that the will must contribute in some modest way to the salvation of an individual. If this were not the case, it seemed that the only way to explain why all people are not saved would be to conclude that God arbitrarily chooses to give grace only to certain individuals. Melanchthon believed that such an affirmation contradicted what the Bible taught (doc. #120).

The issue of the role of the will in salvation became a focus of intense discussion between the Philippists and the Gnesio-Lutherans in 1555, when Johann Pfeffinger, a professor at Leipzig who had assisted Melanchthon in the composition of the Leipzig Interim, published a short collection of theses on this topic (doc. #121). Pfeffinger argued that the will was not like a stone or a block in the process of salvation; rather it was drawn willingly to God. He emphasized this point in order to make it clear that humans alone are to blame if they are not saved. Like Melanchthon, Pfeffinger and his Philippist sympathizers admitted that original sin had weakened the power of the will, but, by their reckoning, this inherited deprivation did not entirely destroy the capacity of the will to accept or reject the gift of grace given through the Holy Spirit.

The Gnesio-Lutherans stood much closer to Luther in their emphasis on the bondage of the will. Writers such as Tilmann Heshus attempted to refute Pfeffinger's arguments by quoting biblical passages that use the language of slavery and death to describe the human predicament. In discussing the issue of predestination, they asserted that it was important to distinguish between God's general desire to be gracious to all creatures and the special election by which God chose those who would believe in Christ (doc. #122).

When the Philippists spoke of the will as a cause of salvation along with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, the Gnesio-Lutherans responded that this could not be so because the impact of original sin was to make the will naturally resistant to God.

In 1559 the controversy became even more complicated when Victorin Strigel, a prominent theologian at the University of Jena, acknowledged his sympathy for the viewpoint of the Synergists and refused to ascribe to the anti-Philippist Book of Confutation, which the Duke of Saxony sought to implement as the doctrinal norm for his territory. Strigel was briefly imprisoned for his act of resistance, but the Duke eventually decided to let Strigel defend his views in a public debate against Matthias Flacius. This Weimar Disputation, held in 1560, had the unexpected result of provoking another controversy. As they discussed the impact of the Fall on human nature, Strigel began to employ Aristotelian metaphysical terminology in his assessment of original sin. He argued that original sin was only an accidental property of the substance of a person. Although the Fall had diminished and distorted the power of the intellect and will, this did not alter the fact that humans were still created in the image of God (doc. #124). When asked to address this philosophical question, Flacius totally contradicted Strigel's assertions. He asserted that the effect of the Fall was to make original sin the very substance of human nature. The image of God was actually transformed into the image of Satan (doc. #125).

The Synergist Controversy lingered on for more than a decade. The Philippists attempted to refute Flacius with both biblical and philosophical arguments and also raised pastoral questions about how simple believers would be affected by the declaration that human nature is imprinted by the image of Satan (doc. #126). Once again, as had happened in the Majorist Controversy, the Gnesio-Lutherans became divided among themselves. Many of the close associates of Flacius charged him with introducing new doctrinal error in the process of responding to the Philippists. This development significantly tarnished the reputation of the person who had been unsurpassed in his influence on the outlook of the Gnesio-Lutheran party since the early days of the Interim crisis.

Although the rest of the controversies that created unsettled conditions in the Lutheran churches involved some of the same disputants, they were not directly stimulated by the Leipzig Interim. The Osiandrist Controversy about essential righteousness takes its name from Andreas Osiander, the distinguished coworker of Luther who had played an important role in the formation of the Lutheran church in Nürnberg. During the Interim crisis, he had taken refuge in Prussia, where he was offered a position as professor of theology at the University of Königsberg. The other theologians in Königsberg resented this appointment because Osiander had never acquired an advanced academic degree in theological studies. They were even more disturbed by the interpretation of the doctrine of justification, which he began to defend in various writings and public disputations. Osiander taught that justification consists of more than the forgiveness of sins based on the imputation of the alien righteousness of Christ. In addition to being declared righteous by God, the sinner is infused with the righteousness of Christ. By the operation of the Holy Spirit, Christ enters the justified sinner and gradually causes the sinner to become righteous (docs. #128 and 129).

Joachim Mörlin, preacher at the cathedral in Königsberg, offered the most extensive critique of Osiander's viewpoint. In particular he objected to the description of

justification as a (doc. #130). This for once, united Osiander's ideas traditional emphasis that had been ta

While the Osiandrist controversy, the Crypto-Calvinist controversy in 1552, when Jo Osiander's extensive critique of Switzerland's Lord's Supper called the traditional Calvinist theology of the Lord's Supper into question in 1529 at the Marburg Colloquy, the fact because he

Although the Lord's Supper, in response to Wittenberg in heaven. It was before, although a Lord's Supper, elements of bread reasserted Luther's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, Christ wherever the claims of the receive the body

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justification as a gradual process and the subjective emphasis on the indwelling of Christ (doc. #130). This controversy was unique in that many Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans, for once, united in condemning Osiander. Both Melanchthon and Flacius agreed that Osiander's ideas about justification by the infusion of righteousness were closer to the traditional emphasis of Catholic theology than to the forensic conception of justification that had been taught by Luther (doc. #131).

While the Osiandrist Controversy preoccupied the attention of theologians in Prussia, the Crypto-Calvinist Controversy began to develop in Saxony. This final dispute started in 1552, when Joachim Westphal, a Gnesio-Lutheran pastor in Hamburg, published an extensive critique of Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper. In 1549 the Reformed churches of Switzerland had worked out a common statement of their beliefs about the Lord's Supper called the Consensus of Zurich (*Consensus Tigurinus*) (doc. #133). This agreement convinced Westphal that there was no significant difference between the sacramental theology of the Calvinists and the ideas of Zwingli, which Luther had condemned in 1529 at the Marburg Colloquy. Westphal wanted to alert the Lutheran churches to this fact because he was disturbed by the growing influence of Calvinism in Germany.

Although the controversy specifically concerned the nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, it also prompted an extensive discussion of other christological matters. In response to Westphal, Calvin argued that after the resurrection, the body of Christ was in heaven. It was not possible for his body to be in many places at the same time. Therefore, although a believer is spiritually nourished by the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, the body and blood are not locally present in, with, and under the elements of bread and wine (doc. #134). Westphal, on the other hand, emphatically reasserted Luther's view that the divine attribute of omnipresence had been communicated to the body of the resurrected Christ. This made possible the local presence of Christ wherever the Lord's Supper was celebrated. Furthermore, it meant, contrary to the claims of the Calvinists, that all participants, the godly as well as the wicked, orally receive the body of Christ when they commune.

Although Melanchthon had originally shared Luther's views about the Lord's Supper, his personal discussions and correspondence with Calvin and Martin Bucer, the reformer of Strassburg, had diminished his certainty about the reality of a sacramental union between the body of Christ and the bread. He tried to stay out of the controversy, but other Philippists, including his son-in-law Kaspar Peucer, became more active proponents of Calvin's sacramental theology in Electoral Saxony. By 1571 they had persuaded the Elector to accept the Dresden Consensus, a summary of teachings about the Lord's Supper that rejected the idea of the ubiquity of Christ's human nature (doc. #135). Two years later, an anonymous Philippist treatise on the controversy titled *Exegesis Perspicua* was even more explicit in calling for toleration of the Calvinist viewpoint (doc. #136). This development set off a major outcry on the part of the Gnesio-Lutherans, who in a short time managed to convince the Elector that he had been the victim of a Philippist conspiracy to replace Lutheranism by Calvinism in Saxony. To prevent this occurrence, he imprisoned or banished the most influential Crypto-Calvinists.

As this last episode indicates, the proliferation of doctrinal disputes became a matter of great concern to the Lutheran princes as well as the theologians. They were particularly

worried that the emperor and the Catholic princes in Germany might take advantage of the disunity between the Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philippists and attempt once again to suppress Lutheranism altogether. Consequently, the Lutheran princes took various initiatives over several decades to promote reconciliation between the two major factions. They organized large-scale consultations between political and religious leaders, but these produced little progress. By 1570, however, they began to meet with some success on the regional level primarily because of the assistance they received from two able theologians who were not closely identified with either the Philippists or the Gnesio-Lutherans, Jakob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz. Andreae was the author of an important set of published sermons intended to evaluate the disputed issues in language that even simple believers could understand. These sermons became an important starting point for discussions with small groups of theologians in southwestern Germany that culminated in an agreement called the Swabian Concord. Chemnitz encouraged support for this proposal in northern Germany and helped draft a revised version of it known as the Swabian-Saxon Concord. After the suppression of the Crypto-Calvinist movement in 1574, the Elector of Saxony also supported the deliberations of Andreae and Chemnitz and sponsored the important consultations they held with several other theologians at Torgau and Cloister Bergen. At last, in May 1577, the theologians reached agreement on the Formula of Concord, which they submitted for approval by the Lutheran churches in two versions, a short form known as the Epitome and a longer form known as the Solid Declaration.

In general, the Formula of Concord evaluated the theology of the Gnesio-Lutheran party more favorably than the positions taken by the Philippists. This is particularly true with regard to the issues under discussion in the *Adiaphorist*, *Synergist*, and *Crypto-Calvinist* controversies. However, it also rejected the extreme view of original sin defended by Flacius in reaction to the *Synergist* tendencies of Strigel and the misleading language that Amsdorf had adopted in response to the view of good works defended by Georg Major.

For a variety of reasons, some doctrinal and some political, a number of Lutheran territorial churches never endorsed the Formula of Concord. Nevertheless, its preparation had the effect of reversing the trend toward factionalism that had gone on for several decades. By 1580, support for the Formula was clearly extensive enough to warrant its inclusion in the Book of Concord, the official collection of important documents summarizing Lutheran doctrinal beliefs that was published in Dresden to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. As part of this collection it would exercise an important influence on the further development of systematic theology in the Age of Orthodoxy.

## THE ADIAPHORISTS

### 105. Melanchthon's Leipzig Interim

This letter of December 10, 1549, was sent from Weimar on behalf of the

From CR 7:251-52

You indeed weep over the churches, which are afflicted by the proclamation of the Gospel. This sadness is common to all. We see shadows of death and learned pastors in the churches; exiles who waste away in poverty; the breaking up of families where the voice of God is not heard. All these things are necessary if they will bring about the peace of the Son of God sitting on the Father, the glory of his work among the people, call the churches and the

In order, therefore, that these things, which are not necessary, may be removed, we have decided to extend, continue these regions. . . . against this model the churches should be a great moderation neither doctrinally nor pastorally are not equalized unjustly.



## THE ADIAPHORIST CONTROVERSY

**105. Melanchthon: Letter on the Leipzig Interim (1548)**

This letter of December 18, 1548, was written to one of Melanchthon's friends in Weimar on behalf of Duke Georg of Anhalt.

From *CR* 7:251-53.



You indeed weep over the damage done to the churches, which are disturbed in various ways by the proclamation of a new form of doctrine. This sadness is common to many pious people. We see shadows covering the truth; many good and learned pastors expelled from their churches; exiles wandering with their families, who waste away from the hardships of exile and poverty; the kindling of new discords; the breaking up of the meetings of dissenters, where the voice of true doctrine has resounded. All these things are most sad in themselves, and they will bring about a limitless scattering among foreign peoples in the future unless the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the eternal Father, the guardian of his church, moves his work among us, for which I indeed pray with my whole heart along with you and all pious people, calling upon him to preserve his churches and their hospitality. . . .

In order, therefore, to retain necessary things, we are less rigid about those things that are not necessary, particularly since some of the rites [that they want to require] have, to a great extent, continued in use in the churches of these regions. . . . We know that much is said against this moderation, but the devastation of the churches such as is occurring in Swabia would be a greater scandal. If it is possible by this moderation it can be brought about that neither doctrine or liturgy are changed and pastors are not expelled, then we are being criticized unjustly. . . .

I am also not moved by the outcries that when a weakening of front has been made, the adversaries will afterwards seek a change of other matters. Our confession concerning necessary things is heard. In this, with God's aid, we will hereafter show constancy more eagerly, since they will not be able to accuse us of being stubborn about small and unnecessary matters. The affair will show that we are contending for great causes. Perhaps also the delay while these things are being discussed will be beneficial to the churches. But even if a delay will be of no advantage, still the consolation is not useless that we have so long spared the weak, and that we have not right away, in the very beginning, desolated the churches, which would occur if we gave up nothing to the powerful. Besides this very arrangement of rites, which many complain about too passionately as an infringement of liberty, is not in itself vicious. . . .

**106. Response of Flacius and Gallus to Some Preachers of Meissen (1549)**

Both the Augsburg and Leipzig Interim documents called for the use of all the traditional Catholic vestments. In 1549, when some pastors in Meissen asked for guidance in deciding whether to comply with this demand, Matthias Flacius and his coworker, Nikolaus Gallus (1516-70), based their advice on considerations of the effect compliance would have in a time of persecution.

From Friedrich Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord in Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), 110.



. . . We do not believe that the robber will let the traveler keep his money, although first he



habit of observing and using in the community of God that are neither expressly commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God.

But soon after, they made this definition: that some adiaphora are themselves free and unforbidden, but others are forbidden and not free. This nonsensical distinction and separation is obviously contradictory speech for it is entirely opposed to the description of adiaphora that they previously set up. For if adiaphora are ceremonies that are neither commanded or forbidden in God's Word, how can one truthfully say that some are forbidden and not free? For if some are forbidden and not free, how can they be adiaphora? . . .

It takes us by surprise that our opponents after so much public instruction should cite the invalid rule and so often repeat as a special argument that in times of persecution, the adiaphora or matters of indifference are no longer free but necessary things; namely, that a necessary confession of faith involves taking a stand upon such things. They cite the example of Daniel [Daniel 6], Eleazar, the seven Maccabees [2 Maccabees 6], and some words of our Lord Christ and Paul.

But they should reasonably concede that this fabricated rule is false and groundless, on account of the judgment that a necessary confession (at the time of persecution or otherwise) is based on those things that the church of God is commanded or ordered to believe, hold, and do in God's Word. For "to confess" signifies to speak, write, and publicly proclaim, according to one's station and calling, the necessary teachings revealed by God and all necessary articles contained in the same, seeking to give an account of the faith, freely and without show, also regardless of any danger to body and possessions, before all the world and everyone. But the adiaphora are not commanded in God's Word, or else they would be neither human traditions nor matters of indifference

that are only instituted for the good order of people in the church. Therefore the confession cannot be based on the accepting or omitting of adiaphora, be it in the time of persecution or any other time. . . .

This belongs to a right confession, that one clearly and decisively confess every part of Christian doctrine according to the type and features of each part in particular. No danger, great or small, should come about to change the necessary confession nor any features of any part of the confession. Now everyone knows that there is a great difference between the faith having to do with the articles of necessary doctrine and outward practices that are not commanded in God's Word but are free and matters of indifference. Therefore, where pure doctrine is not displaced one should and must at all times in and out of danger maintain the correct understanding and use of adiaphora and let Christian freedom be seen so that everyone may understand that adiaphora do not necessarily bind the conscience and that they who do not maintain a ceremony or church practice are not judged or condemned to be cast out and separated from the church. . . .

This has continuously been the church's teaching about adiaphora as Luther himself clarified many times in his writings and thoughts. For when he was dealing with the papists, he himself was prepared to concede and put up with outward customs, so long as they would not extend into forbidden misuse or get forced on the conscience but would be observed for the retention of peace, good order, and discipline. And this was especially his opinion in the judgment that he wrote with his own hand about Augsburg 1530 when a confession was also demanded of our church and the danger was as imminent as it would ever be afterwards.

"So they should not think," he says, "that we are stiff or obstinate about the main point,

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#### Theologians of (1570)

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I for myself am willing and ready to accept all such outer customs and wish for peace as long as my conscience is not thereby burdened, as I have almost always requested in all my books. And in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, in the chapter on human traditions in the church [article 15] it ends with these explicit words: 'At this Augsburg Reichstag we have let ourselves be examined and have been found willing, out of love, to observe some adiaphora with others. For we have among us considered general unity and peace, so long as it can be maintained without burdening consciences, to be preferred above all other things.'"<sup>1</sup>

But the Flacians cite the example of Daniel as a proof that outward matters of indifference should be considered necessary in the time of persecution, because Daniel, after the king of the Medes gave the order that anyone who for thirty days asked for something from any God or man except the king should be thrown to the lions, nevertheless knelt daily in his summer house, when the window was open toward Jerusalem, and petitioned, praised, and thanked his God as he was accustomed to do. This did not fall under the category of adiaphora, for since the royal command tried to omit and abolish the worship of God, which Daniel showed to the true God of Israel according to the law of the Lord and that was even expressly sought by the enemy, Daniel either had to put himself in outward danger or forsake his divine worship. And if he were to persist continually in the invocation of his God, he could not demonstrate this at that time other than by the outward gestures. So he was not free, and it was not an adiaphora, for in this case to refrain from his prayer and invocation entirely and in an open place was to neglect his confession. But it is a far different thing if one maintains pure doctrine and all Christian worship undefiled and witnesses enough about this and still yields something with good discretion in outward matters of indifference without

scorning the truth, wishing for peace, and maintaining necessary doctrine. Rather, one will thereby show the right understanding and use of free matters of indifference.

The example of Eleazar and the seven Maccabees who would rather have died than eat swine's flesh also does not belong here, since the Jewish polity was still in effect and the eating of pork was earnestly forbidden for the Jews in the law of God. The tyrannical Antiochus publicly ignored that which the Bible said and subjected the people to all abominations so that they would forget the law of God and would accept other ways. So, it was truly not an adiaphora or a free matter of indifference for the Jewish people. . . .



#### 109. Epitome of the Formula of Concord: Article 10 (1577)

From BC 515-16.



X. CONCERNING ECCLESIASTICAL PRACTICES Which Are Called Adiaphora or Indifferent Matters

Affirmative Theses

The Proper, True Teaching and Confession concerning This Article

1. To settle this dispute, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that ceremonies or ecclesiastical practices that are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word, but have been established only for good order and decorum, are in and of themselves neither worship ordained by God nor a part of such worship. "In vain do they worship me" with human precepts (Matt. 15[:9]).

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the authority to alter such ceremonies according to its own situation, as may be most

useful and edifying to God. . . .

4. We believe, in the time of persecution, that the confession of the faith should not yield to the outward matters. As the Apostle says: "We have the freedom for you, and do not submit yourselves to men" [Gal. 5:1]. And: "I do not submit to men; what part do I have in the flesh and darkness?" [2 Cor. 5:10]. Of the gospel mission we did not submit [Gal. 2:5]. For in the indifferent matters of the gospel at stake. The confession, as well as the protection of the faith, is at stake. To make no concession, unequivocal confession to God sends and Word to inflict c

THE MAJORIST

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Articles 4 the Interim preservation of the doctrine stressed the in works. Melancthon's new statement of the Leipzig Interim still the retained the same document.

From The Book of the Books of the Holy Spirit ed. Henry Jacobs Council Publi

useful and edifying for the community of God. . . .

4. We believe, teach, and confess that in a time of persecution, when an unequivocal confession of the faith is demanded of us, we dare not yield to the opponents in such indifferent matters. As the Apostle wrote, "Stand firm in the freedom for which Christ has set us free, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" [Gal. 5:1]. And: "Do not put on the yoke of the others; what partnership is there between light and darkness?" [2 Cor. 6:14]. "So that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you, we did not submit to them even for a moment" [Gal. 2:5]. For in such a situation it is no longer indifferent matters that are at stake. The truth of the gospel and Christian freedom are at stake. The confirmation of open idolatry, as well as the protection of the weak in faith from offense, is at stake. In such matters we can make no concessions but must offer an unequivocal confession and suffer whatever God sends and permits the enemies of his Word to inflict on us.



## THE MAJORIST CONTROVERSY

### III. The Leipzig Interim of 1548

Articles 4 through 7 of the Augsburg Interim presented a Catholic interpretation of the doctrine of justification and stressed the importance of love and good works. Melancthon drafted completely new statements on these topics for the Leipzig Interim, but the Gnesio-Lutherans still thought that what he said retained the spirit of the original Catholic document.

*From The Book of Concord or the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, ed. Henry Jacobs (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1908), 265-67.*



### HOW A PERSON IS JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD

. . . In those thus reconciled, virtues and good works should be called righteousness, yet not in the sense that the person on this account has forgiveness of sins or that the person is, in God's judgment, without sin, but that for his Son's sake God regards this weak, inchoate obedience of the believers in this miserable, infirm, impure nature with pleasure; and of these works as righteousness John speaks when he says: "He that does right is righteous" [1 John 3:7]. And it is true that where the works are contrary to God, there is contempt of God, and no conversion to God has occurred in the heart. As is the tree, so also are the fruits. . . .

### OF GOOD WORKS

. . . He who perseveres in sins contrary to conscience is not converted to God and is still God's enemy, and God's wrath abides upon him if he be not converted. This is precisely in accord with Gal. 5:21: "I tell you, as I have told you before, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." . . .

Further, if anyone who has been in God's grace acts against God's command or his conscience, he grieves the Holy Ghost, loses grace and righteousness and falls beneath God's wrath; and if he be not again converted he falls into eternal punishment as Saul and others. . . .

For this reason, to speak briefly, it is readily understood that good works are necessary, for God has commanded them; and if the course of life be in opposition thereto, God's grace and Holy Ghost are rejected, and such sins merit eternal condemnation. But virtues and good works please God thus, as we have said, in the reconciled, because they believe that God receives their person for Christ's sake and will be pleased with this imperfect obedience; and it is true that eternal life is given for the sake of the Lord Christ out of grace, and at the same time that all are heirs of eternal salvation

who are converted to God and by faith receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, the new virtues and good works are so highly necessary that if they are not quickened in the heart, there would be no reception of divine grace. . . .

Thus regeneration and eternal life are in themselves a new light, fear of God, love, joy in God and other virtues; as the passage says: "This is life eternal, to know you the only true God, and me, Jesus Christ." As, now, this true knowledge must shine in us, it is certainly true that these virtues, faith, love, hope, and others, must be in us, and are necessary to salvation. All this is easy for the godly to understand who seek to experience consolation from God.

And since the virtues and good works please God, as has been said, they merit also a reward in this life, both spiritual and temporal, according to God's counsel and still more reward in eternal life, because of the divine promise. . . .



### III. Major: Answer to Amsdorf (November 1552)

Georg Major (1502-74) was rector of the University of Wittenberg during the Schmalkald War and was about to become superintendent of the churches of Eisleben when Nikolaus von Amsdorf published a book attacking him for his association with the drafters of the Leipzig Interim. After this critical evaluation of his candidate, Count Albrecht of Mansfeld withdrew the appointment. In reply to Amsdorf, in 1552, Major tried to disclaim any responsibility for the composition of the Leipzig Interim but continued to support some of what it said about good works. The boldness of Major's defense prompted a flood of Gnesio-Lutheran

polemics. Amsdorf published a brief rebuttal, and his associate, Flacius, alerted others to some problematic implications of Major's position. Major then attempted to clarify his position in great detail in his book on the conversion of Paul. His mentor, Melancthon, retreated from the controversy, but Major continued to find support elsewhere, especially from Justus Menius (1499-1558) in Leipzig.

From Johann Gieseler, *Church History*, vol. 4, 1517-1648, trans. Henry Smith (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868), 438.



I do confess that I have previously taught and still teach, and furthermore will continue to teach all my days that good works are necessary to salvation. And I say publicly with clear words that no one is saved through evil works and also that no one is saved without good works. In addition, I say, let whoever teaches otherwise, even if it is an angel from heaven, be accursed. . . .

Although we teach that works are necessary to the salvation of the soul, nevertheless, such good works cannot or may not effect or merit the forgiveness of our sins, be reckoned as righteousness, or give the Holy Spirit and eternal life. Such precious heavenly benefits are acquired for us only through the death of our one mediator and savior, Jesus Christ, and must be received only through faith. However, good works must be present, not as merits but as required obedience to God. . . .



### III.2. Amsdorf: Brief Instruction concerning Major's Answer (1552)

From Gottlieb Planck, *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie* (Leipzig: Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius, 1796), 482.

We know well, Christian should Nobody dispute nor has anybody contrary, we speak whether a Christian good works that For we all say an and new birth a God and do all that he may be faith. This is the doctrine, and already accused Amsdorf, then teaches and preaches "Good works are same as a Pelagius Christ, and a papists, Cochla these words in Major reintroduced Major is also one of the papists I need, with such and defends that although he afterwards offers clarification a dissembling by of the suspicion along with the

### III.3. Flacius: the Holy Gospel

From Wilhelm Illyricus und Theodor Bläs



We know well, praise God, and confess that a Christian should and must do good works. Nobody disputes and speaks concerning that; nor has anybody doubted this. On the contrary, we speak and dispute concerning this, whether a Christian earns salvation by the good works that he should and must do. . . . For we all say and confess that after his renewal and new birth a Christian should love and fear God and do all manner of good works, but not that he may be saved, for he is saved already by faith. This is the true prophetic and apostolic doctrine, and whoever teaches otherwise is already accursed and damned. I, Nikolaus von Amsdorf, therefore declare that whoever teaches and preaches these words as they stand, "Good works are necessary to salvation," is the same as a Pelagian, a mameluke, a denier of Christ, and a duplicitous papist. For the papists, Cochlaeus, Witzel,<sup>2</sup> and others use these words in the same form and manner as Major reintroduces them to us. Therefore, Major is also entirely possessed with the spirit of the papists because he here, without any need, with such defiance and offense asserts and defends the words of the papists. And although he afterwards maneuvers about and offers clarifications of his position, that is only a dissembling by which he sets himself outside of the suspicion that he accepted and went along with the Leipzig Interim.



### 113. Flacius: Against the Evangelist of the Holy Gown, Dr. Miser Major (1552)

From Wilhelm Preger, *Matthias Flacius Illyricus und seine Zeit*, Bd. 1 (Erlangen: Theodor Bläsing, 1859), 363.



Now if good works are necessary to salvation, and if it is not possible for anyone to be saved without them, then tell us, Dr. Major, how will a man be saved if all his life until his last breath he has lived sinfully, but now, just as he is about to die, he desires to lay hold of Christ, as is the case with many on their deathbed or on the gallows? How will Major comfort such a poor sinner?

It is certainly true that one says to the sinner after absolution: "Go and sin no more," or "Do the righteous fruits of repentance," or "Let your good works shine forth," but how will he produce the fruit or good work that is supposedly necessary for salvation if he is about to die? The poor sinner will declare: "Major, the great theologian, writes and teaches as most certain that no one can be saved without good works, and that good works are absolutely necessary to salvation; therefore I am damned, for until now I have never done any good works." Here, Major will say: "Do them from now on." Then the poor man will answer, as those who teach works-righteousness do: "If I had any longer to live I could do such works are necessary for salvation, but now I am dying."

Furthermore, the devil will also charge his poor conscience with the words of Isaiah who said: "All our good works are as a filthy raiment," or the words of Luther who said, "No good work is without sin. Where then are your good works that are necessary for salvation?" Dr. Luther, as one who experienced many difficult temptations, often said that the devil can easily make our good works dissolve away. But Major speaks, as Dr. Martin used to say it, like an inexperienced theologian and tongue-thrasher.

Major will also have to state and determine the least number of ounces or pounds of good works one must have to be saved. He will also have to determine the exact hour at

which a sinner began to do good works so he can be certain that he has some good works. And so we come back again to the old attack of conscience.



#### 114. Major: Sermon on the Conversion of Paul (1553)

From Wilhelm Preger, *Matthias Flacius Illyricus und seine Zeit*, Bd. 1 (Erlangen: Theodor Bläsing, 1859), 370, and Gottlieb Planck, *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie*, Bd. 4 (Leipzig: Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius, 1796), 481.



When I say the new obedience or good works that follow faith are necessary for salvation, this does not mean that one must earn salvation by good works, or that they can make up, effect, or impart the righteousness by which a person may stand before the judgment seat of God, but that good works are effects and fruits of true faith, which should follow it and which Christ effects in the believers. For whoever believes and is justified is now bound and obligated to begin to be obedient to God the Father, to do good and avoid evil, or else that person risks losing his or her righteousness and salvation. . . .

If now you are justified by faith alone and had become a child and heir of God and if Christ and the Holy Spirit now dwell in you through this faith, then your good works are not done in order to attain salvation (which you already have by grace alone without any works), but in order to retain salvation and not lose it again, good works are necessary to such an extent that, if you do not do them, it is a certain sign that your faith is dead and false, a painted faith, and only an imagined.



#### 115. Melanchthon: Judgment concerning Good Works (1553)

This public position statement by Melanchthon appeared in December 1553.

From *CR* 8:194.



New obedience is necessary. It consists of renewal of life, spirit, light, contemplating and knowing God, joyfully submitting to God, invoking God, submitting ourselves to God, being set on fire by the hearing of the gospel through Word and spirit.

Yet when it is said: New obedience is necessary to salvation, the papists understand that good works merit salvation. This proposition is false; therefore I give up using this way of speaking. Nevertheless, it is customary to say: New obedience is necessary, not as merit but by the necessity of formal cause such as when I say: a white wall is necessarily white. . . .



#### 116. Amsdorf: Preface to Luther's Sermons on John 18-20 (1557)

According to Amsdorf, it was not enough to stop asserting that good works are necessary for salvation. The Lutheran emphasis on grace and faith could only be preserved by a firm rejection of the worth and significance of any human achievement. Amsdorf contradicted Major by stating that good works are detrimental to salvation and supported this position by an appeal to the writings of Luther.

From Walch 8:846.



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#### 117. Amsdorf: Ours to Salvation

From Theodor Amsdorf *nach gleich* Friderichs, 1865

The proposition "salvation" is un words can be u to the type and claims to merit such a proposi understanding, monks, nuns, ar they think it can people also have understanding



Everyone can see and observe from what Dr. Martin Luther professed that he showed no favor to any sects, rabble, or Enthusiasts. Rather, he condemned and rejected them all, as he also would have condemned those of this sort who appeared after his death, such as the Interimists, Adiaphorists, or Majorists. Therefore, it is unfair and shameless of them to associate themselves with D. M. L., crying, writing, and boasting that Doctor Martin taught and wrote as they write and teach, even though the very opposite is obviously found in his books. I shall point out a single, most wicked and dangerous example of this: All who teach that good works are necessary for salvation blatantly teach and write contrary to Luther, yes, against Luther himself. For Luther, of blessed and holy memory, writes many places and especially in Galatians, that good works are not only not necessary, they are also harmful to salvation.<sup>3</sup>



#### 117. Amsdorf: Good Works Are Injurious to Salvation (1559)

From Theodor Pressel, *Nicolaus von Amsdorf nach gleichzeitigen Quellen* (Elberfeld: Friderichs, 1862), 123.



The proposition "Good works are injurious to salvation" is unfairly condemned, for these words can be understood only with reference to the type and nature of works by which one claims to merit grace and salvation. Therefore such a proposition is aggravating to human understanding, wisdom, and holiness and to monks, nuns, and the highly learned; therefore they think it can be fairly condemned. Worldly people also have such a high regard for human understanding and wisdom that they cannot

understand how the good works by which they think they acquire salvation can be injurious. But this is not surprising since it is not possible to hear the Word of God without God's Spirit and grace. All those who believe and teach about religious matters according to the measure of the understanding and busy themselves with philosophy are heretics who have always taught and written that one can grasp and understand with the intellect. Therefore they also judge contrary to God's Word, glossing and interpreting it according to the meaning that is congenial to the intellect and philosophy. In accordance with the human wisdom known to everyone, even the heathen, they all teach in their churches and schools that good works are necessary and good for salvation; in no way will they suffer in the school of the Holy Spirit in which one praises and honors that which the Word of God believes and proclaims. In the schools of the jurists and sophists, the proposition "Good works are injurious to salvation" is condemned. But divine and heavenly wisdom teaches that all men, however pious or holy they may be, even believers, are unrighteous sinners before God and also that all their works are sins that, except for the grace that makes believers and their works pleasing to God, they would be damned as much as the others and their works would be sins, detrimental to their salvation. If they do all that God has commanded and serve God day and night with all good works, they would still be damned with all their works if God went to them in judgment. But that their works are not harmful or damnable is due merely to Christ in whom they believe. . . .



# 118. Epitome of the Formula of Concord: Article 4 (1577)

From BC 498-99.



## Affirmative Theses . . .

2. We also believe, teach, and confess that at the same time, good works must be completely excluded from any questions of salvation as well as from the article on our justification before God, as the apostle testifies in clear terms, "So also David declares that salvation pertains to that person alone to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works, saying, 'Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered'" (Rom. 4[:6-8]), and also, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2[:8-9]).

3. We also believe, teach, and confess that all people, particularly those who have been reborn and renewed through the Holy Spirit, are obligated to do good works.

4. In this sense the words "necessary," "should," and "must" are used correctly, in Christian fashion, also in regard to the reborn; in no way is such use contrary to the pattern of sound words and speech.

5. Of course, the words *necessitas*, *necessarium* ("necessity" and "necessary") are not to be understood as a compulsion when they are applied to the reborn, but only as the required obedience, which they perform out of a spontaneous spirit—not because of the compulsion or coercion of the law—because they are "no longer under the law, but under grace" [Rom. 6:14].



## THE SYNERGIST CONTROVERSY

### 119. Melanchthon: Letter to Spalatin concerning the Luther-Erasmus Debate (1524)

During the debate between Luther and Erasmus about free will, Melanchthon was in touch with both disputants, trying to get them to moderate what they said to each other. On this particular issue, his humanistic background predisposed him to sympathize with Erasmus more than Luther.

From CR 1:673.



Erasmus has written a book on free will. We are sending this book to you. It seems that he has not treated us with contempt. A short while ago I also received letters from him, which you will see. They will also be brought to you by this young man. I desperately desire that this subject, which is the most important in the Christian religion, should be carefully examined, and for this reason I rejoice that Erasmus has taken up the struggle. For a long time I have wished that some prudent person should oppose Luther on this matter. If Erasmus is not this man, I am greatly deceived.



### 120. Melanchthon: *Loci Communes* of 1548

Melanchthon continuously revised his basic summary of Christian theology. In the edition of 1548, written in the year of the Interim crisis, it became more evident to the public that Melanchthon did not totally agree with Luther about the effect of sin upon the power of the will.

From CR 21:658-59.

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I have seen many who, when troubled by their sins, have asked: "How can we hope to be accepted by God when we perceive no new light and no new virtue in us? Free will does nothing, so we must live in mistrust and doubt until we become conscious of rebirth in us." This impression that the will is not active is a dangerous delusion from which one must free the mind. Pharaoh and Saul opposed God freely and without compulsion, although he had given them frequent and convincing proofs of his presence. On the other hand, the conversion of David did not occur in such a manner as when a stone is turned into a fig. Free will cooperated in him; for when he heard the threats and the promises of God, he willingly and freely confessed his faults. . . . God has ordered the preaching of his Word in such a way that when someone considers and accepts the promise, while still struggling with doubt, the Holy Spirit begins to work within. Therefore, when people excuse their idleness because they think that free will does nothing, I answer: "It is an eternal and unchanging commandment of God that you should obey the voice of the gospel, hear the Son of God, and acknowledge the Mediator." You may say, "I cannot." But in a manner you certainly can, and when you have consoled yourself with the gospel, then ask God to assist you, and know that the Holy Spirit is efficacious in such consolation. Convince yourself that God intends to convert us in this manner, when we, moved by the promise, wrestle with ourselves, pray for help, and resist our lack of trust, our disbelief, and other evil inclinations. For this reason some in former times have said that free will has the capability of turning toward grace; that means hearing the promise, endeavoring to assent to it, and struggling against sin. . . . Since the promise is universal, and there are no

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contradictory wills in God, the reason for the acceptance of some and the rejection of others must necessarily be within ourselves. The right use of this doctrine in the practice of faith and in the consolation of the soul will confirm the truth that these three causes concur: the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Will.



## 121. Pfeffinger: Five Questions on the Freedom of the Human Will (1555)

The Leipzig Interim had asserted that God "does not work with man as with a block, but draws him so that his will also cooperates." Johannes Pfeffinger (1493-1573), who had assisted Melanchthon in composing this statement, defended it more fully in the following theses.

From Friedrich Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord in Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), 131.



#14. . . . Some assent or apprehension on our part must occur when the Holy Spirit has aroused the mind, the will, and the heart. Hence Basil says: Only will, and God anticipates; and Chrysostom: He who draws, draws him who is willing; and Augustine: He assists those who have received the gift of the call with becoming piety, and preserves the gifts of God as far as man is able. Again: when grace preceded, the will follows. . . .

#17. If the will were idle or purely passive, there would be no difference between the pious and the wicked, or between the elect and the damned, as between Saul and David, between Judas and Peter. God would also become a respecter of persons and the author of contumacy in the wicked and damned; and to God would be ascribed contradictory wills,

which conflicts with the entire Scripture. Hence it follows that there is in us a cause why some assent while others do not. . . .

#30. For since the promise of grace is universal, and since we must obey this promise, some difference between the elect and the rejected must be inferred from our will, namely, that those who resist the promise are rejected, while those who embrace the promise are received. . . . All this clearly shows that our will is not idle in conversion or like a stone or block in its conduct. . . .

#34. Some persons, however, shout that the assistance of the Holy Spirit is extenuated and diminished if even the least particle be attributed to the human will. Though this argument may appear specious and plausible, yet pious minds understand that by our doctrine—according to which we ascribe some cooperation to our will, namely, some assent and apprehension—absolutely nothing is taken away from the assistance rendered by the Holy Spirit. For we affirm that the first acts must be assigned and attributed to him who first and primarily, through the Word or the voice of the gospel, moves our hearts to believe, to which thereupon we, too, ought to assent as much as we are able, and not resist the Holy Spirit, but submit to the Word, ponder, learn, and hear it, as Christ says: "Whosoever has heard of the Father and learned comes to me." . . .

#36. And although original sin has brought upon our nature a ruin so sad and horrible that we can hardly imagine it, yet we must not think that absolutely all the knowledge that was found in the minds of our first parents before the Fall has on that account been destroyed and extinguished after the Fall, or that the human will does not in any way differ from a stone or a block; for we are, as St. Paul has said most seriously, coworkers with God, whose coworking, indeed, is assisted and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.



## 122. Heshus: On So-called Free Will—Against the Synergists (1562)

Although Tilmann Heshus (1527-88) is best known for his involvement in the Crypto-Calvinist Controversy, he was actively involved in many of the doctrinal debates of his age. This intense Gnesio-Lutheran lost several positions during his career as a pastor and professor because of the offense caused by his polemics.

From Tilmann Heshus, *Vom Vermeinten Freyen Willen: Wider die Synergisten* (Magdeburg: Kirchener, 1562), 2:2; 4.



### PART 2:2

That the human will cannot cooperate or do anything in its conversion, justification, or rebirth is demonstrable from the entire Scriptures, which testify that man is not free by nature and does not have his heart, will, or thought in his power, but affirm to the contrary that his best powers, related to his understanding and will, are ensnared and imprisoned and locked up under the power and tyranny of sin and are the enslaved servant of the devil—thus that he by himself can wish, desire, or choose nothing other than what is opposed to righteousness, pleasing to the devil, and worthy of hellfire. . . .

Origen<sup>4</sup> imagined that the will of man is its own lord who sits on a stool like a judge with virtue and sin, life and damnation before him, and it is up to him to give himself to righteousness or sin as he so chooses. The intellect dreams this and philosophy supports this lie, but God's Word speaks otherwise of this matter, declaring that the natural understanding and will are as if a man lies bound in stocks and

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cannot move himself. Yes, sin is so much his own that he wants or can do nothing but sin and pervert himself in his lusts.

Many passages in the Scripture testify to this. John 8:34: Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. When the Son makes you free, you will die to your sins. Romans 6:20: When you were slaves to sin, you were free from righteousness. Romans 7:14: I am carnal, sold into slavery under sin. Isaiah 50:1: Because of your sins, you were sold. Isaiah 52:3: You were sold for nothing and redeemed without money. How do you reconcile such servitude or slavery with the freedom by which a man can do something for himself? They are as opposed as day and night. . . .

### PART 4

Since we have now, with God's help, clarified the pure and scripturally based doctrine of the unfree will and the conversion of man through God's grace and have also pointed out the errors and falsifications of which we must beware, we will, at last, consider some of the objections of the Synergists. From this everyone may see how our opponents have no ground for their errors in God's Word and will, therefore, hold more firmly to the truth. . . .

The primary false argument of the Synergists is this: If there is no cooperation by a person in conversion, and it is only the work of God, then God must not be of one mind toward all people. Yet Scripture testifies that God is good toward everyone and does not want anyone to be lost (2 Pet. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, there must be a free will in a person, which is the cause why some receive the Word and others reject it.

Answer: This is without a doubt the most difficult argument related to this matter, and the foremost writers of all times have given much consideration to it. . . . It is rightly and truly believed of God that he wants all men to be saved, but it in no way follows that one may

conclude from this that there is some power of free will remaining in man and some cooperation in conversion. Rather, it only follows that God is not the cause of the damnation of men and also does not hinder the salvation of anyone. . . .

It is like a pious father who always wants it to go well with his children. If a child does evil, he orders that one to be flogged. Nevertheless, he continues to wish that it should go well with the child. So, the promise of the gospel demands that one believe in the name of Jesus Christ. God wants all people to be saved insofar as they believe in Christ. But he also wills that the others who do not believe should be damned.

Therefore, it is one thing to speak about the general will of God and quite another to speak about the election and plan of God. For God's election and eternal plan has no condition, but as God has concluded from eternity, so it happens. It is a matter not only of his will, counsel, and pleasure, but also of his work and plan, which no one can understand. If God makes a Christian believe, he does not only give his Word and does not only proclaim his will, but grasps him effectively and renews the man, directs him to faith and the new life without any conditions or cooperation.



## 123. Epitome of the Formula of Concord: Articles 2 and 11 (1577)

From BC 491–94, 552–55, 517–18.



### EPITOME OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD: ARTICLE 2

#### Affirmative Theses . . .

1. On this article it is our teaching, faith, and confession that human reason and understanding

are blind in spiritual matters and understand nothing on the basis of their own powers, as it is written, "Those who are natural do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them and they are unable to understand them" [1 Cor. 2:14] when they are asked about spiritual matters.

2. Likewise, we believe, teach, and confess that the unregenerated human will is not only turned away from God but has also become God's enemy, that it has only the desire and will to do evil and whatever is opposed to God, as it is written, "The inclination of the human heart is evil from youth" [Gen. 8:21]. Likewise, "The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot" [Rom. 8:7]. As little as a corpse can make itself alive for bodily, earthly life, so little can people who through sin are spiritually dead raise themselves up to a spiritual life, as it is written, "When we were dead through our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ" [Eph. 2:5]. Therefore, we are not "competent of ourselves to claim anything [good] as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor. 3[:5]). . . .

#### Negative Theses . . .

4. [We reject and condemn] that, although human beings are too weak to initiate conversion with their free will before rebirth, and thus convert themselves to God on the basis of their own natural powers and be obedient to God's law with their whole hearts, nonetheless, once the Holy Spirit has made a beginning through the preaching of the Word and in it has offered his grace, the human will is able out of its own natural powers to a certain degree, even though small and feeble, to do something, to help and cooperate, to dispose and prepare itself for grace, to grasp this grace, to accept it, and to believe the gospel. . . .

8. . . . Some ancient and modern teachers of the church have used expressions such as, "*Deus trahit, sed volentem trahit*," that is, "God

draws, but he draws those who are willing"; and "*Hominis voluntas in conversione non est otiosa, sed agit aliquid*," that is, "The human will is not idle in conversion but also is doing something." Because such expressions have been introduced as confirmation of the natural free will in conversion contrary to the teaching of God's grace, we hold that these expressions do not correspond to the form of sound teaching, and therefore it is proper to avoid them when speaking of conversion to God.

On the other hand, it is correct to say that in conversion God changes recalcitrant, unwilling people into willing people through the drawing power of the Holy Spirit, and that after this conversion the reborn human will is not idle in the daily exercise of repentance, but cooperates in all the works of the Holy Spirit which he performs through us.

9. . . . Therefore, before the conversion of the human being there are only two efficient causes, the Holy Spirit and God's Word as the instrument of the Holy Spirit, through which he effects conversion; the human creature must hear this Word, but cannot believe and accept it on the basis of its own powers but only through the grace and action of God the Holy Spirit.

#### SOLID DECLARATION OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD

##### II. Concerning the Free Will or Human Powers . . .

It is indeed true that both the Enthusiasts and the Epicureans misuse in unchristian fashion the teaching regarding the impotence and wickedness of our natural free will and the teaching that our conversion and rebirth are the work of God alone and not of our powers. Because of such talk, many people become dissolute and disorderly as well as indolent and sluggish in all Christian activities, such as prayer, reading, and Christian meditation. They say that because they cannot possibly convert to

God on the basis of their own powers, they want to continue in their sin and wait until God will with his blessing.

Other timid thoughts and desires lead them and want them through their weakness not to have a strong obedience. Instead of only weakness,

Therefore, now we want to give the human being instruction through which the oral Word and Spirit desires to effect true repentance, spiritual power and our hearts; and let us use these means and use them.

A person who has heard God and been instructed by the Word externally, stated above, perceives to some extent even after church and listening.

Through the hearing of His work and breaking of wrath through the feel real terror, hearts. Through the gospel of the grace of Christ and through the faith is ignited forgiveness of sin the comfort of this way the Holy Spirit is sent into their hearts.

However, if people read the proclamation and the

God on the basis of their own natural powers, they want to continue to rebel against God or to wait until God converts them against their will with his brute power. . . .

Other timid hearts may fall into troubling thoughts and doubts, whether God has chosen them and wants to make His gifts effective in them through the Holy Spirit, because they do not have a strong, burning faith and heartfelt obedience. Instead, they perceive in themselves only weakness, worry, and wretchedness.

Therefore, on the basis of God's Word we now want to give a further account of how the human being is converted to God; how and through which means (namely, through the oral Word and the holy sacraments) the Holy Spirit desires to be active in us and to give and effect true repentance, faith, and the new spiritual power and capability to do the good in our hearts; and how we should respond to such means and use them. . . .

A person who has not yet been converted to God and been reborn can hear and read this Word externally, for in such external matters, as stated above, people have a free will to a certain extent even after the fall, so that they may go to church and listen or not listen to the sermon.

Through these means (the preaching and hearing of His Word), God goes about His work and breaks our hearts and draws people, so that they recognize their sins and God's wrath through the preaching of the law and feel real terror, regret, and sorrow in their hearts. Through the preaching of the holy gospel of the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ and through meditating upon it, a spark of faith is ignited in them, and they accept the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and receive the comfort of the promise of the gospel. In this way the Holy Spirit, who effects all of this, is sent into their hearts. . . .

However, if people do not want to hear or read the proclamation of God's Word, but disdain it and the congregation of God's people

and then die and perish in their sins, they can neither find comfort in God's eternal election nor obtain mercy. For Christ, in whom we are chosen, offers his grace to all people in the Word and in the holy sacraments, and he earnestly desires that people should hear it. He has promised that where "two or three are gathered" in his name and are occupied with his holy Word, he will be "there among them" [Matt. 18:20].

If such people disdain the tools of the Holy Spirit and do not want to hear, no injustice is done to them if the Holy Spirit does not enlighten them but lets them remain and perish in the darkness of unbelief. . . .

Although God does not force human beings in such a way that they must become godly (for those who persistently resist the Holy Spirit and stubbornly struggle against what is recognized truth, as Stephen said of the obdurate Jews in Acts 7[:51], will not be converted), nonetheless God the Lord draws those people whom he wants to convert and does so in such a way that an enlightened understanding is fashioned out of a darkened understanding and an obedient will is fashioned out of a rebellious will. Scripture calls this creating a new heart [Ps. 51:12].

#### EPITOME OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD

#### XI. Concerning the Eternal Predestination and Election of God . . .

The Pure, True Teaching concerning This Article . . .

4. *Praedestinatio*, however, or God's eternal election, extends only to the righteous, God-pleasing children of God. It is a cause of their salvation, which God brings about. He has arranged everything that belongs to it. Our salvation is so firmly grounded on it [cf. John 10:26-29] that "the gates of hell will not prevail against it" [Matt. 16:18]. . . .

7. This Christ calls all sinners to himself and promises them refreshment. He is utterly

serious in his desire that all people should come to him and seek help for themselves [cf. Matt. 11:28; 1 Tim. 2:4]. He offers himself to them in the Word. He desires them to hear the Word and not to plug their ears or despise his Word. To this end he promises the power and activity of the Holy Spirit, divine assistance in remaining faithful and attaining eternal salvation.

11. That "many are called and few are chosen" [Matt. 20:16] does not mean that God does not want to save everyone. Instead, the reason for condemnation lies in their not hearing God's Word at all or arrogantly despising it, plugging their ears and their hearts, and thus blocking the Holy Spirit's ordinary path, so that he cannot carry out his work in them; or if they have given it a hearing, they cast it to the wind and pay no attention to it. Then the fault lies not with God and his election but with their own wickedness [cf. 2 Pet. 2:9-15; Luke 11:47-52; Heb. 12:15-17, 25].



## THE FLACIAN CONTROVERSY

### 124. The Weimar Disputation between Valentin Strigel and Matthias Flacius (1560)

The Weimar Disputation was arranged by Duke Johann Friedrich of Saxony and took place August 2-8, 1560. In discussing the impact of original sin on free will, during the second session of this debate, Strigel, the Philippist, raised the issue that provoked the Flacian controversy.

From Simon Musaeus, *Disputatio de Originali Peccato et Libero Arbitrio inter M. Flacius et V. Strigelium* (1563), 22-26.



STRIGEL: Original sin is a defect and deprivation in all of the powers and faculties of man

and chiefly in these three: first in the mind, second in the will, and third in the heart. In the mind, it is a loss of divine light, that is, of the knowledge of God's nature and will. This darkness appears as terrible and dismal doubts about all divine things, about providence, and the promises and threats of God. These evils, I believe I have made clear, are both privative and positive. Furthermore, in the will, it is not only an aversion to God as the proper object to which it ought to be directed, but also a conversion, that is, an appetite for things that are illicit and prohibited by God such as seeking security in secondary things, contempt for God, and murmuring against God. Third, in the heart, it is an ataxia, that is, a manifold confusion of appetites or desires, wrongful love of ourselves, lust for vengeance, and the proliferation of inordinate passions. On account of this defect and deprivation, God has become angry with the whole human race for, indeed, this poison or evil is propagated to all the posterity of Adam. . . .

Original sin [however] is not a substance or a certain substantial quantity. Rather, it is a quality of a secondary sort, that is, a loss of strength or power: It has a liability attached to it, that is, an assignment to eternal punishment by the judgment of the most just God. From this, it is possible to discern what it really is, namely, not a substance or a property that differentiates one species from another but an accident, a privation that comprises both a deficiency and a disordered movement or impulse. . . .

FLACIUS: I have cited testimonies where the Word of God says that original sin is the very composition of the old man. They all understand it to be the same mass. Ezekiel 11 and 36 say that the heart is like a stone, that a new heart must be created, and many other things that distinctly indicate that original sin is a substance.

STRIGEL: Then you de-

accident?  
FLACIUS: Luther distinguishes the accident. But, secondly, you are continuing to concern yourself with substance, which ought not to be the way of the ancients in matters concerning God. Third, you say that the heart is of its own free action of man. Scripture testifies that what pertains to the heart has not only been killed but destroyed, but man is renewed into the image of God [Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; 1:26-27], which speaks of a new corpse, etc. Here Paul speaks of evil, or the annihilation of the old man; thus he adds that the heart is captured by a Turk, that is, to doing what his nature desires, so Satan effectually drives him like an ox by the force of the law from the aim of original sin into plausibilities. Yea, the elements from the Word of God distinguish original sin as a corruption of the flesh or total mass of the old man. I say, Scripture does not distinguish original sin as if it were just as yeast leavened the nature of man is such that man is poisoned and inclined to evil and Scripture testifies to this. STRIGEL: I am not denying the grace of God or the work of the Holy Spirit, but that no ambiguity exists in this through an example, for a nurse can nourish a weak child to seek its nature.



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STRIGEL: Then you deny that original sin is an accident?

FLACIUS: Luther distinctly denies that it is an accident. But, second, it should be noted that you are continuing to dispute from philosophy concerning substance and accident, which ought not to be the way of thinking of theologians in matters concerning religion and truth. Third, you say that the will cannot be deprived of its own free action without the annihilation of man. Scripture testifies to the contrary that what pertains to the divine in the intellect has not only been killed, put to death, and destroyed, but man also has been transformed into the image of Satan. Look at Colossians 2[:11-13], which speaks of the circumcision of a corpse, etc. Here Paul is speaking of inherent evil, or the annihilation of the good powers. To this he adds that the will is the possession of Satan. See 2 Timothy 2[:26]. Just as a Christian captured by a Turk is not free but is restricted to doing what his master wills or commands, so Satan effectually holds the hearts of his captives like an ox by the nose. . . . You digress from the aim of our deliberation and deviate into plausibilities. You do not refute my arguments from the Word of God. Luther speaks of original sin as a corruption of nature like the flesh or total mass of a man changed by leprosy. I say, Scripture does not allow us to speak of original sin as if it were a trivial accident, but just as yeast leavens a total mass, so the total nature of man is subjected to corruption. I say that man is poisoned, is entirely prone or inclined to evil and entirely unable to do good. Scripture testifies to this. . . .

STRIGEL: I am not saying that man can grasp the grace of God of his own powers, but that the Holy Spirit stretches out our hands. And so that no ambiguity will remain, I will clarify this through an example. Only a mother or wet nurse can nourish a child, for a child is too weak to seek its nourishment by its own exer-

tions. If the mother or wet nurse does not nourish it, it will die of hunger. Now the question is how the poor child draws the milk from its mother's breast. I say that the child sucks and draws in the milk, but only if the mother has directed the mouth of the child to her breast. If this does not happen, the child would not know what to do. . . .

FLACIUS: The mother not only offers her breast, but the child also feels hunger in itself and possesses the power in its body to receive food. Yes, it moves its mouth and lips and is prepared to suck.

Strigel, then, would have it that there is a power in us to desire and receive the food, that is, the benefits of God. In fact, you thereby attribute to corrupt man a very great power with respect to spiritual things. Now, then, deny that this opinion is Pelagian. . . .

I explain my entire view as follows: Man is purely passive. If you consider the innate faculty of the will, its willing, and its powers, then he is purely passive when he receives. But if that divinely bestowed willing or spark of faith kindled by the Spirit is considered, then this imparted willing and this spark are not purely passive. But the Adamic will not only does not operate or cooperate but, according to the innate malice of the heart, even operates contrarily.



## 125. Flacius: Treatise on Original Sin from *Clavis Scripturae* (1567)

Flacius resisted the introduction of Aristotelian metaphysical categories into the discussion of theology. In his 1567 guide to the study of the Bible, he emphasized this fact. Nevertheless, in the treatise on original sin appended to this volume, he persisted in speaking of original sin as part of the substance of human nature.

From *Clavis Scripturae* (Leipzig: Erythropilius, 1695), 771-72, 787.



I believe and assert that original sin is a substance, because the rational soul (as united with God) and especially its noblest substantial powers, namely, the intellect and will, which before had been formed so gloriously that they were the true image of God and the fountain of all justice, uprightness, and piety, and altogether essentially like unto gold and gems, are now, by deceit of Satan, so utterly perverted that they are the true and living image of Satan, and, as it were, filthy or rather consisting of an infernal flame, not otherwise than when the sweetest and purest mass, infected with the most venomous ferment, is altogether and substantially changed and transformed into a lump of the same ferment. . . .

Some object that I introduce new opinions into the church when I affirm that original sin, or rather a certain part of original sin, is a substance. I respond: there is no good reason to say this opinion is new since it is taught in so many works not only by Luther and the writings of others as I will afterwards show, but also most wisely in sacred Scripture itself, where truly this sin is many times described in essential words. . . .

Luther in a sermon for the feast of the circumcision says:<sup>5</sup> the disease that should be cut out adheres not in any works but in nature itself. The substance of man is totally corrupted so that sin is the origin of man and whatever is in him. Furthermore, this sin is original, or rather the whole nature of man is sin, even if no actual sin, as it is called, is committed. This sin is not committed as all other sins are but exists in itself, lives, and produces all sin. It is a substantial sin that is not sinned at a certain hour or time, but as long as a man lives that sinning endures. . . .



Flacius Illyricus

In sum, original evil is that same fount of all evil, of all guilt and penalty in man. Scripture therefore says the heart is depraved, perverted, and distorted, that it rushes headlong to evil or ranges even from infancy. Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Jer. 17:9—the heart is blind and hardened, stony and adamant (Deut. 29:4; Ezek. 11:19; 31:26; Rom. 1:21; Eph. 4:18).



## 126. Final Report of the Theologians of Wittenberg and Leipzig (1570)

For once, the Philippists found Flacius in a vulnerable position. He had raised questions about the pastoral implications of speaking of the necessity of good works. Now they questioned the impact of speaking of original sin as part of human substance.

From *Endlicher Bericht* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1570), 164.



Let every rational, God-fearing man consider what an immeasurable and unholy misery, cross, and grief it would be for the poor female

sex if a pregnant woman include that the first essence, a special who formed it image, who dwells essentially—impish larva in its form one in this case. Christian fathers gives children to think what a joy their children, if be received that sent from God: how would a Child the shape of the of your body is dwelling in you: ated in an essence and likeness, the child received a highly corrupted essence, such a g ask, a pious, G viewed their child kind of joy, comfort have in marriage.

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sex if a pregnant woman should think and conclude that the fruit that she bore is not, in essence, a special gift of God but of the devil who formed it essentially according to his image, who dwells in it and powerfully—yes, essentially—impressed and implanted his devilish larva in its flesh and blood. Yes, what will one in this case say to the poor female sex? All Christian fathers and mothers to whom God gives children search their own hearts and think what a joy or pleasure they will have in their children, if this great consolation should be received that children are a work, gift, present from God as Psalms 127, 128 testify. But how would a Christian father or mother view the shape of the child if we must say: This fruit of your body is the flesh and blood of Satan dwelling in you and your wife, formed and created in an essential way according to his image and likeness, that it is from Satan that your child received and obtained, through you, a so highly corrupted, evil nature, substance, and essence, such a gruesome, horrible larva. If, we ask, a pious, God-fearing father and mother viewed their children with this thought, what kind of joy, comfort, and pleasure would they have in marriage? . . .

In opposition to this horrible, abhorrent blasphemy, which is basically nothing other than the old, damned Manichaean abomination, except that it is advanced and excused with more crafty and poisonous words, we differentiate the substance and essence and the entire life of man, which God alone gives and sustains, from original sin, that dung and poison clinging to the essence that comes from and is derived from the devil. And we continually say that the devil takes no part along with God in forming the substance and essence, the entire life and all that is essential in man, and that this human nature, although it is sinful and corrupted (and though this sin is inherited in birth along with and next to the nature and

essence of man and is originally from the devil), still it is not from the devil but is a work and creation of God alone, as can be shown from countless passages in the Word of God. The entire 139th Psalm (139:13-16) is a splendid and comforting testimony that our life and essence is formed, given, and sustained by God alone. "You, O Lord," this psalm says, "were with me in my mother's body and I thank you that I am so wonderfully made. Marvelous are your works, that my soul confesses. My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was formed within the earth. Your eyes saw me when I was still not ready to be born. All my days were written in your book and still shall be and it could not be otherwise."



## 127. Epitome of the Formula of Concord: Article I (1577)

From BC 488-91.



### Affirmative Theses . . .

1. We believe, teach, and confess that there is a difference between original sin and human nature—not only as God originally created it pure, holy, and without sin, but also as we have it now after the fall. Even after the fall this nature still is and remains a creature of God. This difference is as great as the difference between the work of God and the work of the devil. . . .

3. On the other hand, we believe, teach, and confess that original sin is not a slight corruption of human nature, but rather a corruption so deep that there is nothing sound or uncorrupted left in the human body or soul, in its internal or external powers. Instead, as the church sings, "Through Adam's

fall human nature and our essence are completely corrupted." . . .

#### Negative Theses . . .

[13.] Concerning the Latin words *substantia* and *accidens*, since they are not biblical terms and are words unfamiliar to common people, they should not be used in sermons delivered to the common people, who do not understand them; the simple folk should be spared such words.

But in the schools and among the learned these terms are familiar and can be used without any misunderstanding to differentiate the essence of a thing from that which in an "accidental" way adheres to the thing. Therefore, these words are properly retained in scholarly discussion of original sin.

For the difference between God's work and the devil's work can be made most clear through these words because the devil cannot create a substance but can only corrupt the substance, which God has created, in an "accidental" way, with God's permission.



#### THE OSIANDRIST CONTROVERSY

##### 128. Osiander: Concerning the Only Mediator (1551)

This treatise contained the fullest development of Andreas Osiander's thought about human righteousness and the nature of justification.

From *Von dem Einigen Mittler Jesu Christo und Rechtfertigung des Glaubens, Bekantnus* (Königsberg, 1551) in H. R. Frank, *Die Theologie der Concordienformel*, Bd. 2 (Erlangen: Theodor Bläsing, 1861), 99-100; and Gottlieb Planck, *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie*, Bd. 4 (Leipzig: Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius, 1796), 268-69.



Since we are in Christ through faith and he is in us, we also become the righteousness of God in him, just as he became sin for us [2 Cor. 5:21]. That is, he showered us and filled us with his divine righteousness, as we showered him with our sins, so that God himself and all the angels see only righteousness in us on account of the highest, eternal, and infinite righteousness of Christ, which is His Godhead itself dwelling in us. And although sin still dwells in our flesh and clings to it, this sin is just like an impure little drop in comparison with an immense pure ocean, and God does not want to see it on account of the righteousness of Christ that is in us. . . .

By the fulfillment of the law and by his suffering and death, Christ merited and acquired from God, his heavenly Father, this great and exalted grace: He has not only forgiven our sin and taken the unbearable burden of the law away from us, but also wishes to justify us through faith in Christ, to infuse justification or righteousness, and, through the working of His Holy Spirit and the death of Christ into which we are incorporated by Baptism, to kill, wipe out, and entirely exterminate the sin that, though already forgiven, still dwells in our flesh and clings to us.

Therefore the second part of the office of our dear and faithful Lord and Mediator Jesus Christ consists of his turning toward us and dealing with us poor sinners, as with a guilty party, in such a way that we acknowledge this great grace and receive it by faith with thanksgiving. In so doing, he can make us alive from the death of sin by faith, and completely mortify and exterminate that sin, which, though already forgiven, still dwells in our flesh and clings to us. This, above all else, is the act of our justification.



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##### 129. Osiander's Righteousness (Osiander's Righteousness)

The following texts with which arguments about righteousness come from Christian.

From *Gottlieb Lebrecht's protestantische Theologie*, Siegfried Lebrecht

The entire fulfillment of the law is bodily and con-

Christ dwells. . . . And he pre- place when he and drinks my him." John 6: me will keep n him, and we v John 14:21. . . .

He also dili him and says: by the word th in me as I abie

Therefore says: "I live, y who lives in n



Andreas Osiander

### 129. Osiander: Disputation on Righteousness (October 24, 1550)

The following text reveals the biblical texts with which Osiander supported his arguments about the righteousness that comes from Christ's indwelling in the Christian.

From Gottlieb Planck, *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie*, Bd. 4 (Leipzig: Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius, 1796). 271-73.



The entire fullness of deity dwells in Christ bodily and consequently also in those in whom Christ dwells. . . .

And he promised us that this would take place when he said: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him." John 6:56. And again: "Whoever loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come and dwell with him." John 14:21. . . .

He also diligently admonishes us to abide in him and says: "You have already been purified by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you." John 15:3-4. . . .

Therefore St. Paul boasts and audaciously says: "I live, yet it is no longer I, but Christ, who lives in me." Galatians 2:20. . . .

Thus we are justified with his essential righteousness: One will call him "The Lord is our righteousness." Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16. . . .

Therefore we live with his essential righteousness and will also henceforth live, as he says, "Just as the living Father has sent me, and I live because of my Father's will, so whoever eats of me will also live because of my will." John 6:57. . . .

But to eat the flesh of Christ and to drink his blood means in this passage nothing other than to believe that he has offered his body for our sins—but thus that through this faith we become one flesh with him and are purified with his blood from our sins. . . .

Whoever does not hold to this manner of our justification, no matter what he may confess with his mouth, is certainly a Zwinglian at heart, for it is impossible for one to believe that the true body of Christ is in the bread and his true blood is in the cup without believing that Christ truly dwells in the Christian. . . .

They also teach things colder than ice who hold that we are simply regarded as righteous on account of the forgiveness of sins, and not on account of the essential righteousness of Christ, who dwells in us through faith. . . .



### 130. Mörlin: Apology concerning the Osiandrist Enthusiasts (1557)

Joachim Mörlin wrote several important treatises against Osiander's position. The following excerpt concisely shows the counter-arguments that he drew from biblical texts.

From *Apologia auff die vermeinte widerlegung des Osiandricher Schwermers in Preussen M. Vogels* (Magdeburg: Lotter, 1557), Dii-Diii.



### THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN THE TEACHINGS OF PAUL AND OSIANDER

For Paul, "to impute" means that God reckons an alien innocence to us and on account of this receives us as righteous and pious, although we are still not so in ourselves. Romans 2 and 4.

To the contrary, for Osiander, it means that righteousness is present and at hand in us.

For Paul, "justification" means that the godless one who has no good work or good reputation can easily be accounted or accepted as righteous on account of the obedience of Christ to eternal life. Romans 4.

To the contrary, for Osiander, it means that righteousness pours out, flows, and evidently bubbles up through a little funnel.

For Paul, "righteousness" means the gracious forgiveness of our sins, which we experience without the law and any works, through faith in the obedience of Christ and his merits, by which we are eternally accepted and saved by God. Romans 3 and 4.

To the contrary, for Osiander, righteousness means the piety with all virtues that moves us to do good.

In summary, Paul credits it all to the grace of God, the merits of Christ, and because of that the forgiveness of sins. He cannot allow the law or works to be used or praised along with renewal as righteousness before God, but modestly excludes them with words such as: by faith alone, grace, not of ourselves, without the law, without works, and so forth. This is powerfully declared in Romans 3 and 4, 1 Corinthians 4, Ephesians 2. He also considers renewal a result or fruit of the righteousness of faith and repentance.

To the contrary, Osiander teaches in one summary that the grace of God, the merits of Christ, the forgiveness of sins in his blood are not and cannot be righteousness, and, in rebuttal, states that when one teaches this, it is a horrible idolatry and blasphemy.

For Osiander, our righteousness before God to eternal life is the renewal and entirely new

life that comes from God dwelling and working in us.



### 131. Melancthon: Confutation of Osiander (September 1555)

For once, Melancthon basically agreed with a theological judgment made by his Gnesio-Lutheran opponents.

From *CR* 8:582-83.



We clearly affirm the presence or indwelling of God in the reborn. We do not say that God is present in them like the power of the sun at work upon the veins of the earth, but that the Father and the Son are actually present, breathing the Holy Spirit into the heart of the believer. This presence or indwelling is what is called spiritual renewal. This personal union, however, is not the same as the union of the divine and human natures in Christ but is an indwelling like someone living in a separable domicile in this life.

We should say in addition that although this indwelling or renewal is necessarily present in the reborn, it does not endure unless that faith first shines that justifies a person before God, that is, the faith by which one has the remission of sins, and is reconciled and accepted by God to eternal life on account of the obedience of the mediator, as it says in Daniel [Dan. 9:18] and many other places: We are heard by the Lord not on account of our own righteousness but on account of his mercy. Although God dwelt in Moses, Elijah, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Peter, and Paul, nevertheless none of them claimed to be righteous before God on account of this indwelling or the effecting of their renewal but on account of the obedience of the Mediator and his gracious intercession, since, in this life, the remnants of

sin were still in the renewal is pleasing preference should and intercession o says, we are chosen Ephesians 3: through confidence through

Osiander especially article and counter account of the account of the account of the ob not by the im Mediator through proposition "By "By faith we are p just by something God. Thus in re papists say: "V renewal," except where the papist just when God diminishes the l obscures the gr chief consolation into perpetual d unless it contem concerning the inhabitation unkl this faith. It is p one is to believe ward in forgiveness this dogma of O nicious to consc and condemned.



### 132. Epitome cord: Article 3

From *BC* 494-90

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### Confutation of 1555)

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sin were still in them. Therefore, although this renewal is pleasing to God, infinitely greater preference should be given to the obedience and intercession of the Mediator, since, as Paul says, we are chosen in love [Eph. 1:4]. And Ephesians 3: through whom we have access in confidence through faith in him.

Osiander especially makes an issue of this article and contends that man is righteous on account of the indwelling of God, or on account of the indwelling God, not on account of the obedience of the Mediator, and not by the imputed righteousness of the Mediator through grace. He corrupts the proposition "By faith we are justified" into "By faith we are prepared that we may become just by something else," that is, the indwelling God. Thus in reality he is saying what the papists say: "We are righteous by our renewal," except that he mentions the cause where the papists mention the effect. We are just when God renews us. He therefore diminishes the honor due to the Mediator, obscures the greatness of sin, destroys the chief consolation of the pious, and leads them into perpetual doubt. For faith cannot exist unless it contemplates the promise of mercy concerning the Mediator. Nor is there an inhabitation unless consolation is received by this faith. It is preposterous to teach that first one is to believe in the indwelling and afterward in forgiveness of sins. Therefore, since this dogma of Osiander is both false and pernicious to consciences, it should be shunned and condemned.



### 132. Epitome of the Formula of Con- cord: Article 3 (1577)

From BC 494-96.



### CONCERNING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH BEFORE GOD . . .

#### Affirmative Theses . . .

2. Accordingly, we believe, teach, and confess that our righteousness before God consists in this, that God forgives us our sins by sheer grace, without any works, merit, or worthiness of our own, in the past, at present, or in the future, that he gives us and reckons to us the righteousness of Christ's obedience and that, because of this righteousness, we are accepted by God into grace and regarded as righteous. . . .

5. We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word "to justify" in this article means "to absolve," that is, "to pronounce free from sin": "One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 17[:15]); "Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Rom. 8[:33]). When in place of this the words *regeneratio* and *vivificatio*, that is "new birth" and "making alive," are used as synonyms of justification, as happens in the Apology, then they are to be understood in this same sense. Otherwise, they should be understood as the renewal of the human being and should be differentiated from "justification by faith."



### THE CRYPTO-CALVINIST CONTROVERSY

#### 133. The Consensus of the Churches of Zurich and Geneva (1549)

Although the Zurich Consensus (also called the *Consensus Tigurinus*) never gained the status of a formal confession for the Reformed tradition, it was important as the first successful effort to reconcile the eucharistic theology of the churches influenced by Zwingli and Calvin.